

## Chapter Four: Recovery

### Getting Back to Normal



# After An Earthquake

*After an earthquake, be prepared for aftershocks and plan to take cover.*

## The First Things to Do

- ❖ Check yourself and the people around you for injuries. Provide first aid if necessary.
- ❖ Do not strike a match, light a fire, turn on light switches or use a metal flashlight until you are sure there are no gas leaks.
- ❖ If at night, use a chemical lightstick to look for imminent danger.
- ❖ If you need help, make as much noise as possible to attract attention. Use a whistle.

## Take Care of Problems

- ❖ If you hear or smell a gas leak, turn off the gas valve immediately. Ventilate the room if possible. Remember, once you turn off the gas, it is never safe to turn it back on yourself. Only a licensed plumber or PG&E (1(800)743-5000) can safely turn on the gas once it has been turned off.
- ❖ Locate your emergency supplies and put your disaster plan into action.
- ❖ Refer to your phone book for the "First Aid and Survival Guide."
- ❖ Listen to your battery powered radio for emergency information and instructions. Tune to KCBS 740 AM, KGO 810 AM or KLIV 1590 AM.
- ❖ Look for and extinguish small fires.
- ❖ If electrical cords are severed or damaged, turn off the electricity at the fuse or circuit box. Disconnect the damaged cords and then turn the electricity back on.
- ❖ If there is a water leak, turn off the water at the house's main valve.

### Assess Structural Damage

- ❖ Check around your home for cracks in drywall, plaster or stucco.
- ❖ Check for bulges or displacement around the foundation.
- ❖ Visually inspect your roof and chimney from ground level for obvious damage. Do not attempt to get on your roof.
- ❖ Check for broken windows and carefully clean up any broken glass.
- ❖ Test your doors for ease of operation. Doors that stick or are difficult to open and close may indicate the structure has shifted. If this has occurred, do not reoccupy the house until it has been checked for structural soundness.

### Communications

- ❖ Make sure phones are hung up and not jarred off their hooks.
- ❖ Avoid using the telephone except to report life-threatening emergencies.
- ❖ If the telephone lines are not working, try your cellular phone from the highest possible location.
- ❖ Use a public pay phone, as they are typically on a separate telephone circuit apart from the normal residential lines.

# After A Fire

*Whether a single home or an entire area has been burned, victims of a fire need to protect their property and make their recovery easier and faster.*

## Decisions and Actions Immediately After a Fire

- ❖ Protect your property from further damage, weather and vandalism. Attach plywood over broken windows and doors.
- ❖ Contact your local disaster relief services whether you are insured or not. The Red Cross or Salvation Army can help you arrange for temporary housing, food, eyeglasses, medication and other essential needs. Take any valuables with you.
- ❖ If you can't take pets with you, make sure they have a clean and safe environment to stay in, such as a friend's house or kennel.
- ❖ If your property is the only damaged property on the street, notify the police. They will try to keep an eye on your property.

## Notify the Following Parties of Your Situation and Your Relocation Address

- ❖ Family and friends
- ❖ Insurance agent
- ❖ Mortgage company
- ❖ Employer
- ❖ Children's school
- ❖ Bank
- ❖ Utility companies
- ❖ Post Office (to hold or forward your mail)
- ❖ Newspaper or magazine companies
- ❖ Fire department (if the fire is under investigation)
- ❖ Department of Motor Vehicles

# After Severe Weather

*Although floodwaters may be down in some areas, many dangers might still exist.*

## Keep Listening to the Radio or TV

The news media will provide news about what to do, where to go or places to avoid. They will also provide information on assistance that may be available through local, state and federal government and disaster relief organizations.

## Exercise Caution if You Travel

Roads may be closed because they have been damaged or covered with water. If you see a flooded road or barricade, go another way. If you must walk or drive in areas that have been flooded:

- ❖ Stay on firm ground.
- ❖ Keep away from standing water that may be electrically charged from underground or downed power lines.
- ❖ Travel carefully because roads and walkways will be very slippery.

## The Clean-Up Process

As soon as possible, get a copy of the book *Repairing Your Flooded Home*. It can be downloaded free from the American Red Cross website at [www.redcross.org](http://www.redcross.org). It will tell you how to:

- ❖ Enter your home safely.
- ❖ Check for gas or water leaks and how to have services restored.
- ❖ Protect your home and belongings from further damage.
- ❖ Record damage to support insurance claims and requests for assistance.
- ❖ Clean-up appliances, furniture, floors and other belongings.
- ❖ Hire a state credentialed clean-up or repair contractor. Be sure they are qualified to do the job and be wary of people who drive through the neighborhood offering to help in cleaning up or repairing your home. Check references.

# Coping with Disaster

*There are many causes of stress, especially following a disaster.*

*Recognizing the symptoms can help you cope effectively.*

## Stress During Disasters

Emergency situations affect each of us differently. If you are prepared, you will be an important source of support for the people around you.

In addition to the physical aspects of a disaster, there may also be psychological effects. The most common of these will be stress. In a disaster, most things become stressful; however, the loss of a loved one, family separation, loss of treasured possessions, and disruption of daily routines are especially difficult.

## Recognizing Stress

Some of the symptoms of stress include:

- ❖ Agitation
- ❖ Irritability and anger
- ❖ Disorientation and confusion
- ❖ Apathy and despair
- ❖ Elevated stress levels can even lead to physical symptoms.

## Tips for Dealing with Stress

There are a number of things you can do to deal with stress. Some of these include:

- ❖ Relaxation and Breathing. Sit down, relax your shoulders, take a deep breath and hold it for a count of 5 seconds then exhale forcefully.
- ❖ Do simple stretching exercises to loosen tense muscles.

### Participation in Recovery Activities

Participation in recovery activities helps relieve stress, and rebuilds morale. Be sure to take regular rest and food breaks.

### Talk about Experiences

People suffering from excessive stress should be encouraged to talk about their experiences. Children require extra reassurance when expressing their fears. Be an “active” listener and don’t become judgmental.

### Eat Nutritious Foods

Try to eat nutritious foods. Avoid excessive consumption of caffeine and sugar. You should also avoid consuming alcohol.

### Things to Avoid

When assisting stress victims, you should NEVER:

- ❖ Show resentment
- ❖ Throw water at or strike a victim
- ❖ Tell a victim to “snap out of it”
- ❖ Blame a victim
- ❖ Ignore a victim
- ❖ Give sedatives unless prescribed by a doctor

### Additional Help from Government Services

County mental health agencies usually begin offering crisis intervention services a few days after an earthquake, when state and federal disaster funds begin to make their way to the local jurisdictions.